

SITUATION REPORT NO. 2
INCIDENT NO. 2002-040
DATE: May 23, 2002 TIME: 4:30 p.m.

TO: Governor John Hoeven
State Capitol
Bismarck, N.D. 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Spring Fires Statewide – Dry conditions in areas of high fuel content have contributed to an increased fire potential this spring. State fire management experts note that the average fire size this year is approximately 10 times larger than the 10-year average.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: On May 20, a man suffered from smoke inhalation when a silo and milking parlor caught fire on a farm between Surrey and Minot in Ward County. He was treated and released from a local hospital.

As indicated in the first report, a Kidder County man was killed and his brother was injured while tending a stubble field fire.
3. DAMAGES: Officials for the N.D. Forest Service reported that a relatively dry winter and mild temperatures have provided an abundance of fully cured grass and timber fuels to feed any wildfires that start. Below normal temperatures and a lack of soil moisture have delayed greenup significantly, extending the spring fire season nearly one month longer than usual.

Forest Service officials have noted another anomaly. This spring, more fire activity has been occurring in eastern North Dakota; typically, more fires are reported in the west.

Since January 1, 2002, the North Dakota Interagency Dispatch Center has received 465 reports of fires that have burned 15,435 acres. North Dakota averages 600 fires per year that burn approximately 11,000 acres. The dispatch center coordinates fire response resources and information exchanges.

The National Weather Service (NWS) issued a red flag warning on May 21 for western and central North Dakota. The warning was extended until 10 p.m. that evening because of strong southerly winds, dry pasture conditions and the threat of lightning over western North Dakota. On May 22, a red flag warning was issued for the southeastern portion of the state.

The N.D. Rangeland Fire Danger Index was in the low and medium categories May 23 since much cooler air has worked its way into North Dakota. On May 24, the index is forecasted to be in the medium to high categories as temperatures moderate.

Fire Reports:

On May 17, Logan County firefighters responded to a 300-acre blaze involving alfalfa and stubble ground. A county resident was charged with violating a state fire law by not first creating a 50-foot-wide firebreak. He also apparently left the fire unattended.

On May 20, a silo and milking parlor burned on a farm located between Surrey and Minot in Ward County.

Also on May 20, a trash fire north of Anamoose in McHenry County destroyed a garage, a shed and a semi-tractor. The fire apparently rekindled the next day and burned nearby trees.

On May 21, a fire, located four miles west and one mile north of Manvel in Grand Forks County, burned 300 acres of Conservation Reserve Program (CPR) land. One resident was notified about the possible need to evacuate.

Two barns and tree rows burned on May 21 when a straw fire was rekindled by strong winds in south central Kidder County. Firefighters also responded to a small straw fire, located approximately five miles northeast of Steele.

On May 21, a fire, located five miles north and one mile east of Cooperstown in Griggs County, burned a two mile area and came within one half mile of a farmstead and a power substation before it was contained.

Also on May 21, a fire burned approximately 800 acres of grassland and forest in the Jay Wessels Wildlife Management Area, located in Pembina County. The fire threatened one residence and an outbuilding. Firefighters had achieved 98 percent containment on May 22 but were pulled off the fire due to severe thunderstorm activity. Significant amounts of rain and snow fell in the area of the fire that night. Firefighters expect to contain the fire when they return to the scene today. The fire required response from the Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Walhalla Fire Department and the State Forest Service. The Cavalier Fire Department was on standby.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: Responders include fire departments, dispatch centers, ambulance services, law enforcement, emergency management and the Kidder County Coroner's Office.

STATE: Agencies monitoring fire conditions and reports include the Governor's Office, the N.D. Forest Service, State Radio Communications, the State Fire Marshal's Office, the North Dakota State Game and Fish Department, the North Dakota Highway Patrol, the North Dakota State Parks and Recreation Department, the North Dakota National Guard, the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Division of Emergency Management.

FEDERAL: Agencies providing assistance include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S Forest Service, the National Park Service, the National Weather Service and the Bureau of Forestry/Fire Council, a division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

5. VOLUNTEER ACTIONS: Neighbors assisted with the response to fires.
6. MAJOR ACTIONS: The N.D. Division of Emergency Management provided county and tribal emergency managers with severe fire danger talking points, a news release and a N.D. Forest Service brochure titled "Protect Your Property from Wildfire: 10 Steps to Being Firewise in North Dakota."
7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: No assistance is needed at this time.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: No change from the previous report.
9. OTHER: Appropriate state, local and private entity emergency operations plans and procedures have been implemented.

The N.D. Rural Fire Mitigation Guide is posted on the N.D. Division of Emergency Management web site: <http://www.state.nd.us/dem/>.

Situation Reports published by North Dakota Emergency Management are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is <http://www.state.nd.us/dem/>.

Douglas C. Friez, State Director